

Statement of Congressman Robert Wexler
Subcommittee on Europe and Emerging Threats:
Germany After the Election: Implications for Germany, Europe and U.S. - German
Relations
November 9, 2005

I want to thank you for holding today's hearing on the German elections and its implications for the European Union as well as the United States. I also want to thank all of the witnesses who are testifying before the committee today.

Mr. Chairman, it is apparent that negotiations are still ongoing in Berlin and that a new government headed by Angela Merkel leader of the Christian Democrats in coalition with the Social Democrats will be formed shortly. I am confident that my colleagues in Berlin will move beyond this impasse and address difficult economic and domestic reforms.

At the center of Europe, a new German government must continue its strong leadership role in the EU which has suffered serious setbacks this year including the French and Dutch "no votes" against the constitution and a serious budget stalemate. In addition, while the overall transformation of whole, free and democratic Europe has been largely successful, recent rioting in France which has spilled over into Germany and Belgium has exposed the need for the EU and its member states to revamp integration policies to address growing frustrations of inequality and discrimination in Muslim communities across the continent.

The EU which has grown to twenty-five and is on the cusp of admitting Bulgaria, Romania and beginning accession negotiations with Turkey and Croatia needs an engaged and focused Germany in order to address enlargement, economic, security, political and foreign policy issues. In particular it is important that the new government which has been divided on the issue of Turkey's accession efforts carefully consider the extraordinary economic and security benefits in supporting Ankara's accession negotiations. Having played a significant role in the Middle East, the Balkans and Eastern Europe, Berlin must take an even greater role in stabilizing and promoting trade liberalization, democracy and peace in these regions.

Although relations between Washington and Berlin have at times been strained following differences over Iraq -- in terms of US interests globally few partnerships are as important as our relations with Germany. As Europe's leading economic engine and the world's third largest economy Germany is one of America's most important trading partners and will be for the foreseeable future.

In the context of US-German intelligence, security and military cooperation -- Berlin has been an indispensable transatlantic ally and it is in the interest of both nations' that this multifaceted collaboration continues at the highest levels. There are two specific examples, among many, where the US-German partnership has been paramount. First, Germany has been an integral part of the EU3' and US efforts to thwart Iran's nuclear

program. It is my hope that the common position that the U.S. and EU have shared as it relates to thwarting Iran's development of nuclear weapons will continue in the critical months ahead, especially as we look toward the possibility of sanctions at the UN.

Second, sharing America's goal of a free, stable and democratic Afghanistan, Germany has contributed several thousand troops and resources to the International Security Assistance Force and currently has 100 elite combat troops working alongside American counterinsurgency forces. Furthermore, NATO's effort to expand operations in Afghanistan could not have occurred without German support and leadership and Berlin should be praised for their role in promoting the establishment of Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Additionally, I want to thank the members of the German Bundestag who just yesterday voted overwhelmingly in favor of extending by one year the mandate of German troops operating in the U.S.-led global campaign against terror in the Mediterranean, Horn of Africa and in Afghanistan.

Mr. Chairman, Germany's economic success benefits the United States and greater intelligence and military cooperation between Washington and Berlin is primary to guaranteeing both nations' security and that of our allies in Europe and globally. The challenges ahead are stark for the new German government, however, I am hopeful that a new coalition government led by Angela Merkel will follow in the footsteps of previous administrations and maintain strong US-German relations as well as Berlin's leadership at the forefront of international economic and foreign matters. More than ever, given the myriad of challenges facing the US including the war on terror and preventing the proliferation of WMD it is critical to have reliable and like-minded partners in Berlin and Europe -- prepared to expend greater economic, military and political capital.